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RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 6321
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ 5470
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 3496
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RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 4247
RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 6178
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN 1275
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 6936
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO 1310
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 3720
RUEHRG/AMCONSUL RECIFE 6841
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RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO 4648
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DEPT PASS USAID TO LAC/RSD, LAC/SAM, G/ENV, PPC/ENV
TREASURY FOR USED IBRD AND IDB AND INTL/MDB
USDA FOR FOREST SERVICE: LIZ MAHEW
INTERIOR FOR DIR INT AFFAIRS: K WASHBURN
INTERIOR FOR FWS: TOM RILEY
INTERIOR FOR NPS: JONATHAN PUTNAM
INTERIOR PASS USGS FOR INTERNATIONAL: J WEAVER
JUSTICE FOR ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES: JWEBB
EPA FOR INTERNATIONAL: CAM HILL-MACON
USDA FOR ARS/INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH: G FLANLEY
NSF FOR INTERNATIONAL: HAROLD STOLBERG

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [TBIO](#) [ECON](#) [SOCI](#) [XR](#) [BR](#)
SUBJECT: SOUTH AMERICA ESTH NEWS, NUMBER 96

BRASILIA 00001185 001.2 OF 016

1. The following is the ninety-sixth in a series of newsletters, published by the Brasilia Regional Environmental Hub, covering environment, science and technology, and health news in South America. The information below was gathered from news sources from across the region, and the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Hub office or our constituent posts. Addressees who would like to receive a user-friendly email version of this newsletter should contact Larissa Stoner at stonerla@state.gov. The e-mail version also contains a calendar of

upcoming ESTH events in the region. NOTE: THE NEWSLETTER IS NOW ALSO AVAILABLE ON THE BRASILIA INTRANET PAGE, BY CLICKING ON THE 'HUB' LINK.

[12. Table of Contents](#)

Agriculture

--(3)Brazilian Agro-Power Heats Up

Health

--(4)Chile Opens First Public Stem Cell Bank

Water Issues

--(5)Amazon the World's Longest River, Claim Brazilian Scientists

Forests

--(6)Google to Harness Satellite Power for an Amazon Tribe

--(7)Peru: Harmonizing USG Cooperation in Forestry Sector

--(8)Brazilwood Gets Global Protection

--(9)Green Gold: How a Brazilian Forest of Rubber Trees Is Bouncing Back

Wildlife

--(10)Chile Researchers Help Repopulate Llamas in Patagonia

--(11)Suriname: Psychedelic Purple versus the Luster of Gold

Science & Technology

--(12)Venezuela Invigorates Gambian Science

--(13)Brazil is out of ISS Project

--(14)Foreigners have more patents than Nationals in Colombia

--(15)Venezuelan R&D Investment Increases Fivefold

Pollution

BRASILIA 00001185 002.2 OF 016

--(16)Pollution Crisis: Santiago's Air Worst of Last Eight Years

--(17)Chile: Toxic Runoff Devastates Region VII River

Climate Change

--(18)World Bank Targets Forest Preservation-Climate Link

--(19)Amazon State Adopts Brazil's First Global Warming Law

Energy

--(20)Brazil to Assist Paraguay in Exporting Biofuels

--(21)Colombia and Cuba Sign Energy Cooperation Agreement

--(22)Chile's Search for a Diversified Energy Matrix

--(23)The Madeira Complex: International Banks to Fund Deforestation and Displacement

General

--(24)Guyana: Payment for Ecosystem Services Is Golden Opportunity, Seminar Told

--(25)Brazil Bars USAID-Sponsored Project under Alleged Suspicion of NGO Actions in the Amazon

--(26)Partnerships from Five Nations Receive 2007 Seed Awards for Innovation in Local Sustainable Development

--(27)Brazil Federal Prosecutors Ask State to Suspend Alcoa's Bauxite Mining License

Agriculture

[13. Brazilian Agro-Power Heats Up](#)

MAY 28, 2007 - Brazil, one of the world's agricultural superpowers, will see changes in the map of its emblematic crops, like coffee and soybeans, as a result of global climate change, says the latest research. Even the most optimistic scenarios outlined in the studies by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predict that the thermometer will keep rising and will alter the rainfall patterns over much of South America. Agro-meteorological researcher Moacir Antonio Berlato, from the agronomy department at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, says that various studies have already shown that warming is affecting farming

practices across the southeastern region of the South American

BRASILIA 00001185 003.2 OF 016

continent. In the coming decades, grain crops will be increasingly difficult to grow in southern Brazil, while perennials like coffee will tend to prefer zones with more moderate temperatures, which means the center of production could shift to the south, according to an Embrapa (government's agricultural research agency) study. Excessive heat in the southern hemisphere summer will likely push production of crops like rice, beans, maize and soy towards Brazil's central-west.

Source - Tierramerica

Health

14. Chile Opens First Public Stem Cell Bank

MAY 30, 2007 - A new public stem cell bank that collects and freezes blood from umbilical cord donations will now be available for users of Chile's public healthcare system. The new center, named the Bank of Life, is a joint operation run by the Catholic University of Chile and the Genomika Foundation. Experts expect the new the center to greatly aid in the treatment of some of the sickest patients in the country. Blood from umbilical cords contains stem cells that are frequently used to treat blood diseases, and the center's opening marks the first time in Chile that donated matter will be available to patients in the public health care system. Three private umbilical cord blood banks already exist in the country, but users pay a monthly fee to preserve the samples. These stem cells are only available to family members of the original donor. The new center will be financed by private donations of both umbilical cord blood and the money to finance the center. The stem cells will be made available to any patient in need of the high tech treatment.

Source - Santiago Times (no link)

Water Issues

15. Amazon the World's Longest River, Claim Brazilian Scientists

BRASILIA 00001185 004.2 OF 016

June 17, 2007 - The claim follows an expedition to Peru that is said to have established a new starting point further south and it puts the Amazon at 6,800km compared to the Nile's 6,695km. The new claim in Brazil follows an expedition by scientists which is said to have discovered a new source for the Amazon in the south of Peru and not the north of the country as had been thought for many years. While the exact location has yet to be confirmed from two choices, scientists say either would make the river the longest in the world. The Amazon is now said to begin in an ice-covered mountain in southern Peru called Mismi. Researchers traveled for 14 days, sometimes in freezing temperatures, to establish the location at an altitude of 5,000m. The research was coordinated by the National Geographical Institute of Peru, with the help of their colleagues in Brazil.

Source - MercoPress

Forests

16. Google to Harness Satellite Power for an Amazon Tribe

June 10, 2007 - When the Brazilian government failed to defend his tribe against loggers and miners, the leader found a high-tech ally. Amazon Chief Almir Surui knew it was the first step in his struggle

to forge an alliance he hopes will save his 1,200-member tribe. Almir says loggers and miners have already killed 11 Surui chiefs -- Surui is both the common surname and name of the tribe -- who tried to prevent them from entering their lands over the past five years, and he says Brazilian government officials have failed to stop the violence. So the 32-year-old indigenous leader, a stocky man who often dons a headdress made from feathers of Amazonian birds, opted for another route -- an appeal to Google. During his visit to the Bay Area late last month, Almir, the first Surui to graduate from college, asked the folks at Google Earth for high-quality satellite imagery that would allow the tribe to monitor loggers and miners, who have no legal right to operate on the tribe's 600,000-acre reserve. His plea fell on receptive ears with company officials in Mountain View, who are now at work on a plan to let the Surui use Google's technology to raise awareness of their plight by working

BRASILIA 00001185 005.2 OF 016

with satellite providers to vastly improve image resolution.

NOTE: Chief Almir Surui's recent visit to the US was sponsored by the USG through the International Visitor's Program. He was nominated by USAID/Environment Brazil.

Source - SF Gate

17. Peru: Harmonizing USG Cooperation in Forestry Sector

JUNE 15, 2007 - With some of the most diverse ecosystems in the world, Peru seeks to find a balance between protecting its environment and deriving economic benefits from its natural resources. As a vote in the U.S. Congress on the U.S.-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement (PTPA) approaches, the Government of Peru will need to address implementation of the agreement's environmental chapter, in particular amendments on illegal logging. In order to harmonize the array of environmental programs offered by various USG agencies, representatives of USAID, the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) and ECON met with senior INRENA (GOP's National Natural Resource Institute) officials on June 1 to present and discuss USG forestry cooperation and assistance in Peru. Post is developing a coordinated strategy for assistance to the Peruvian forestry sector which includes the following: USAID-funded activities in voluntary forest certification, forestry rule of law, INRENA institutional capacity building, and protected areas management; USDA support for providing PL 480 Title I resources to fund specific projects in the areas of voluntary forest certification, community management and reforestation, forestry rule of law, and institutional capacity building; and State to fund environmental law enforcement training.

Source - LIMA 2099

18. Brazilwood Gets Global Protection

JUN. 07, 2007 - The iconic tree that gave Brazil its name and the world's violinists their bows [recently] got extra protection to prevent it from sliding toward extinction. But the conference that overwhelmingly supported protecting brazilwood, or pau brasil in Portuguese, rejected similar moves for three other South American tropical trees - the Spanish cedar and two species of rosewood.

BRASILIA 00001185 006.2 OF 016

Brazil welcomed support for its plan to regulate trade in brazilwood timber by delegates at the triennial meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, or CITES. The plan will protect the tree - known for its hard, blood-red wood - while allowing it to "continue to be used to delight us in the hands of inspired musicians and orchestras across the world," said Fernando Coimbra, head of the Brazilian delegation.

Source - Miami Herald

19. Green Gold: How a Brazilian Forest of Rubber Trees Is Bouncing Back

MAY 30, 2007 - In the 19th century, Brazil dominated the global market in natural rubber - but not any more. The country now accounts for less than 1 per cent of world production, and the reason is a fungus called *Microcyclus ulei*, which attacks the leaves of rubber trees. It has caused a massive fall in latex production. Scientists believe it is only a matter of time before the fungus spreads to the big rubber plantations of South-east Asia, which would affect anyone who uses rubber products - and that's just about everyone. After two decades of research into resistant varieties of rubber trees, scientists in France and Brazil believe they could now be on the verge of a breakthrough. They have selectively bred more than a dozen varieties of rubber tree that appear to resist fungal infections well enough for the trees to thrive. Field trials suggest that a handful of these varieties may be good enough to bring rubber production in Brazil up to the levels enjoyed in Asia.

Source - Independent

Wildlife

[10. Chile Researchers Help Repopulate Llamas in Patagonia](#)

JUNE 15, 2007 - Chilean investigators are working with Brigham Young University to genetically select the best and most productive characteristics of Chile's llama population. Their aim is to ultimately repopulated Chile's southern Patagonia with llamas, which could become an economic resource for the region and also contribute

BRASILIA 00001185 007.2 OF 016

to halting the erosion of Patagonia's fragile soil, which llama hooves do not wear down. The Chilean Institute of Farming Investigations in the Agricultural Ministry has been working with Brigham Young University since 2005 in a genetics project that aims to identify a series of related molecular markers in llamas with valuable characteristics. The valuable characteristics include reproductive capabilities, resistance to disease, quality of fiber, and growth rate, among other things. If successful, the geneticists could help developed some of the finest wools in the world. The end result of genetically-enhanced llamas will eventually be reintroduced to the Patagonian lands of their natural-born ancestors.

Source - Santiago Times (no link)

[11. Suriname: Psychedelic Purple versus the Luster of Gold](#)

JUNE 14, 2007 - The discovery of 24 new animal species by Surinamese and American scientists, including a frog with psychedelic purple markings, has given Suriname world-wide attention, as reported in over 150 newspapers and journals. These articles have also highlighted the threat to Suriname's highly diverse ecosystem from mercury pollution caused by illegal gold mining. The study that led to the discoveries was carried out by Conservation International (CI) and was paid for, by bauxite mining companies Suralco and BHP-Billiton, who are looking into the environmental impact of mining in their concession area. Community conscious Suralco looks to be a good corporate citizen, while illegal gold miners continue to pollute the area.

Source - PARAMARIBO 303.

Science & Technology

[12. Venezuela Invigorates Gambian Science](#)

JUNE 06, 2007 - The Governments of Gambia and Venezuela have finalized a five-year agreement to cooperate on improving research and development in agriculture, health, and energy sectors in the African country. The agreement, finalized during the Gambian

BRASILIA 00001185 008.2 OF 016

president's tour of South America last month, will see Venezuela providing funds, technicians and researchers to the Gambia, and encourage cooperation between public research institutions, universities and private enterprises in the two countries. Venezuela will also help improve infrastructure in institutions such as the University of The Gambia. The agreement - now in effect - was ratified by members of the Gambia National Assembly in April.

NOTE From US Embassy Caracas: The Venezuelan government frequently signs these types of cooperation agreements, but rarely follows through with much of what it promises.

Source - SciDev

13. Brazil is out of ISS Project

MAY 31, 2007 - Brazil is no longer an active participant in the International Space Station (ISS) project, said John Logsdon, director of the George Washington University Space Policy Institute and a NASA advisor. "Although it is unlikely that NASA will take any formal action to cancel its contract with the Brazilian Space Agency, Brazil no longer appears [in NASA documents] as an ISS contributor," he was quoted as saying. The press report explains how Brazil failed to provide any of the ISS equipment described in a 1997 agreement with NASA, at an estimated cost of USD 120 million. Logsdon also reportedly said that Brazil's inability to meet its obligations and the fact that Brazil paid Russia to fly its astronaut left a "bad taste in the mouth" of NASA officials. The Brazilian Space Agency (AEB) made the following statement in the story: "[AEB] and Itamaraty are beginning negotiations with NASA and the U.S. State Department towards a new state of cooperation between Brazil and the United States, which had, at a certain time, a setback because of the problem with the U.S. participation in [the Brazilian satellite launch base at] Alcantara. ... AEB isn't just interested in participating in the ISS project, but also [more broadly]. Brazil and the United States have come closer together and the terms of a new agreement could be broader."

Source - Public Affairs US Embassy Brasilia

14. Foreigners have more patents than Nationals in Colombia

BRASILIA 00001185 009.2 OF 016

June 02, 2007 - Ninety-three percent of patent requests in Colombia are from entities from outside the country, according to the head of the Industrial Property of the Superintendence for Industry and Commerce, Giancarlo Marcenaro Jimenez. In 2006, his office received 2,003 requests, of which 1,862 were foreign and only 141 (7 percent) were presented by residents. This reflects a growing interest from foreign companies towards Colombia, but also the lack of knowledge of national firms to legalize their own creations and little technological innovation in the country. According to Jimenez, few people working with innovation and development are aware that they can protect their work results through patents. Jimenez also pointed out that Colombians have a discount in fees charged for patenting, which should motivate more national requests.

Source - SciDev

15. Venezuelan R&D Investment Increases Fivefold

MAY 29, 2007- A Venezuelan law, which requires companies to contribute part of their annual income to science, technology and innovation programs, has increased investment in scientific research and development fivefold. Hector Navarro, Venezuela's Minister of Science and Technology, announced the news at a press conference on May 18. Navarro said that 4,579 out of 6,649 eligible public and private companies - those with annual gross revenues above USD 1.5 million - were forced by law to contribute 0.5-2 per cent of their annual gross income to the country's scientific development. The funds were collected for the first time in January, based on profit calculations for 2005. Navarro says the companies have contributed approximately USD 2.5 billion, increasing the investment in research and development to 2.11 per cent - up from 0.45 per cent in 2005 -

of gross domestic product.

The total investment greatly exceeded the expectations of Venezuelan science authorities, who had calculated the companies' contribution to be about USD 860 million.

Source - SciDev

Pollution

BRASILIA 00001185 010.2 OF 016

[16. Pollution Crisis: Santiago's Air Worst of Last Eight Years](#)

JUNE 15, 2007 - Santiago's air pollution problem has reached critical mass. With the worst pollution months of July and August yet to come, Santiago has already registered more "high risk" pollution days than all of 2006. May 12 was the single worst day in the last eight years, according to Chile's National Commission of the Environment. Santiago's Pollution Plan to solve this annual problem has had a rough go of things, due to problems with the pollution measuring system, a lack of personnel to enforce the restrictions, and a lack of rain. Santiago's population is experiencing high rates of respiratory problems. Many Chile's government officials have been reduced to praying for rain as a means to fight pollution.

Source - SANTIAGO 977

[17. Chile: Toxic Runoff Devastates Region VII River](#)

JUNE 8, 2007 - Authorities in Region VII declared an environmental state of emergency at the Mataquito River due to a toxic runoff that has killed thousands of fish and birds. The likely source of the pollution is a pulp plant located near the town of Licancel. The plant is owned and operated by forestry giant CELCO, a Chilean-owned company with a dismal environmental record. On June 6 the regional health ministry imposed a fishing ban and warned people not to eat any fish caught in the highly contaminated river. This is not the first time for CELCO, in 2004 the company caused a disaster of immeasurable proportions in Region XIV's Carlos Anwandter Wetland Sanctuary, where thousands of black-necked swans died and/or migrated away because of pulp plant poisoning. Autopsies conducted on the dead swans attributed their demise to alarmingly high concentrations of iron and other metals in the water. The chemical change in the polluted area was so extreme it altered the color of the water and killed off the swans' lichen food source.

Source - Santiago Times (no link)

Climate Change

BRASILIA 00001185 011.2 OF 016

[18. World Bank Targets Forest Preservation-Climate Link](#)

June 11, 2007 - The global effort to stem climate change could soon include paying countries in the tropical belt to not cut down their rain forests, beginning with a World Bank pilot project. The World Bank is planning to start a USD 250 million investment fund to reward countries such as Indonesia, Brazil and Congo for "avoided deforestation." The Group of Eight leading nations, after meeting in Germany, concluded that stopping deforestation could provide a "significant and cost-effective contribution toward mitigating greenhouse-gas emissions" and encouraged the development of the World Bank's project. Many details of the project remain to be ironed out. The World Bank hopes Group of Eight nations will supply most of the USD 250 million, Mr. Bosquet said. The bank will work with governments, local communities and nongovernmental organizations to set guidelines on how to monitor projects and make sure money will be channeled only to those that strictly protect

forested areas. To qualify, governments also will have to sign up to nationwide-action plans combating issues such as illegal logging.

Source - World Bank (please contact Larissa Stoner for complete article)

19. Amazon State Adopts Brazil's First Global Warming Law

JUNE 5, 2007 - Brazil's sprawling Amazon state enacted the country's first law to fight global warming by selling carbon credits from communities that limit deforestation and environmental degradation. The law creates a "jungle fund" or "forest scholarship" that "rewards jungle communities for protecting their habitat and reducing deforestation," said Amazon Governor Eduardo Braga. Under the scheme, countries and businesses with high levels of pollution can invest in the fund and receive carbon credits from local communities that agree to curb deforestation, Amazon Environmental Secretary Virgilio Viana told reporters. He said the state, which

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accounts for one third of Brazil's vast Amazon jungle, hopes to build the fund to 300 million dollars, with 30 million a year going to some 60,000 families in the region by 2010. Currently 8,500 families are listed to benefit. The law was welcomed by environmental groups who hoped it will "set a vital example" for Brazil's federal government to follow, said Greenpeace's regional

BRASILIA 00001185 012.2 OF 016

director Paulo Adario.

Source - YahooNews

Energy

20. Brazil to Assist Paraguay in Exporting Biofuels

MAY 30, 2007- Paraguay's Minister of Industry and Commerce Jose Maria Ibanez stated that his country wishes to export biofuels with the support from Brazil in order to strengthen its production. "We are building together a new scenario by becoming a region that exports renewable energy instead of importing petroleum," stated Ibanez at the end of the Paraguay-Brazil Biofuels Seminar, held in Asuncion May 21. The heads of state from both Brazil and Paraguay were present at the event, where they signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the production of biofuels. The Ministry of Industry and Commerce also took the opportunity to announce the creation of a National Institute for Biofuels, which will regulate norms and guarantee the quality of the product.

Source - SciDev

21. Colombia and Cuba Sign Energy Cooperation Agreement

JUNE 08, 2007 - On May 22, The Ministry of Mines and Energy (MME) of Colombia and the Ministry of Basic Industry of Cuba signed a three-year agreement for energy cooperation aimed at developing alternative energy sources and improving efficiency in both countries. There are no commercial provisions in the accord. Rather, the agreement calls for the promotion of energy efficiency and development of renewable energy sources through academic, cultural and technical exchanges. Biofuels exchanges figure prominently as Cuba seeks to jump-start its ethanol industry with support from Colombia, as well as Venezuela.

Source - BOGOTA 00004172

22. Chile's Search for a Diversified Energy Matrix

BRASILIA 00001185 013.2 OF 016

JUNE 07, 2007 - The Achilles heel of Chile's economy is its need to

import 90 percent of its energy. There is no immediate solution to that dependency, but the Government of Chile is looking at creative and environmentally-sound ways to address this weakness. Diversification is one part of the solution. For example, draft legislation would require that at least five percent of Chile's energy come from renewable sources by 2010. In addition to renewable sources, there is some interest in nuclear energy as part of the long-term solution. At the same time, Chile's chronic energy problems must contend with a new Environmental Ministry not willing to fast-track energy projects.

Source - SANTIAGO 914

¶23. The Madeira Complex: International Banks to Fund Deforestation and Displacement

MAY 15, 2007- Along the Madeira, the second-largest tributary to the Amazon, local communities are facing the proposed construction of the Santo Antonio and Jirau dams, part of the Madeira River Complex.

The project has received a commitment of partial funding from the Brazilian national bank Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento (BNDES) and forms part of the portfolio of 335 internationally-financed megaprojects known as IIRSA (the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure of South America). The Madeira Complex includes four dam projects: two in Brazil, one binational dam between Brazil and Bolivia, and one in Bolivia. The Santo Antonio and Jirau dams would produce 3,150 and 3,300 megawatts of hydroelectricity respectively for the energy-deficient urban area of Sao Paulo. The total cost for the two dams alone is calculated at USD 9 billion. Locks built to control the flow of water through the dams and dredging at the head of the 3,380-km river would also expand transport of soy, timber, and minerals along the Madeira, integrating a waterway that extends from the Peruvian and Bolivian Andes to the Atlantic port of Belem. According to local leaders in Porto Velho, Brazil, the environmental impact assessment (EIA) of Santo Antonio and Jirau ignores the indirect and regional environmental and social impacts for local populations downriver, such as sediment and mercury accumulation, and diminished fish breeds. Instead, the EIA takes into account only direct impacts surrounding the urban municipality of Porto Velho and nearby areas.

BRASILIA 00001185 014.2 OF 016

Source - Americas IRC Online

General

¶24. Guyana: Payment for Ecosystem Services Is Golden Opportunity, Seminar Told

JUNE 14, 2007 - Payment for ecosystem services is a golden opportunity for the Guiana Shield (Suriname, French Guiana and Guyana) and Guyana has many natural assets so Guyanese should develop long-term strategic ways to take advantage of this, a noted Costa Rican environmentalist says. According to Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, Regional Vice President of Conservation International (CI) and former Costa Rican Minister of Environment and Energy, policy initiatives by governments and mechanisms that offer Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) aid in environmental sustainability. These were some of the views he expressed at the half-day seminar at Le Meridien Pegasus Hotel. There were working session discussions on presentations on 'PES in Costa Rica: Conservation and Rural Development' by Rodriguez and 'Payment for Ecosystem Services: Shared Agenda between Conservation and Development' by Rosimeiry Portela from CI. Conservation International (CI) Guyana hosted the afternoon seminar which saw participation by environmentalists, government officials, including Prime Minister Samuel Hinds and Presidential Adviser Navin Chandarpal, and representatives from the diplomatic community.

Source - Stabroek News

¶25. Brazil Bars USAID-Sponsored Project under Alleged Suspicion of

NGO Actions in the Amazon

MAY 31, 2007 - A two-page spread in Correio, the main daily in the federal capital, claimed that the Brazilian Foreign Ministry has just blocked the Amazon Basin Conservation Initiative (ABCI), a project sponsored by the USAID, under suspicion that participating NGOs would be involved in espionage. Story carries a Q&A interview with Brazilian General Maynard Marques Santa Rosa, Secretary for International Affairs with the Defense Ministry, who is reportedly

BRASILIA 00001185 015.2 OF 016

preparing a dossier on the issue for Itamaraty. "Some of these NGOs are used, quite easily and cheaply, as instruments for intelligence gathering by foreign intelligence agencies. This is known because the secret services of the United Kingdom and of the United States have been working in this region," Gen. Santa Rosa is quoted as saying. Story notes that the general took a course on "policy and strategy" at the U.S. Army War College in Pennsylvania in 1988-89. According to the daily, "That's where he detected for the first time the foreign interests on the Brazilian Amazon, where, according to his estimates, there are 100,000 NGOs of all kinds operating without any control from the Brazilian government."

Source - Public Affairs US Embassy Brasilia

126. Partnerships from Five Nations Receive 2007 Seed Awards for Innovation in Local Sustainable Development

MAY 30, 2007 - The global community of organizations and agencies that constitute the Supporting Entrepreneurs for Environment and Development (Seed) Initiative announced the winners of the 2007 Seed Awards. The South America winners are: In Brazil, Projeto Bagagem, which creates unique travel packages that give visitors a first-hand look at local development initiatives and nature reserves in a novel approach to community-based ecotourism; In Ecuador, a partnership operating in the Andes has reintroduced native cereal and tuber crops that diversify food production, improve local food security and reduce soil degradation. The partnership then sells surplus yield through a women's organization it has created in three communities resulting in new economic, financial and marketing engines for the area; In Peru, T'ikapapa links small-operation potato farmers also in the Andes with high-value niche markets in urban centers. T'ikapapa promotes biodiversity conservation and environmentally friendly potato production techniques while giving farmers open access to technological assistance and innovation, encouraging local farmer's associations and propagating the flow of market information. Over the next 12 months, each of the five Seed Award recipients will receive targeted support services specifically designed to expand and extend their activities, turning them from a good project idea into a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable enterprise.

Source - USG Sustainable Development Program

BRASILIA 00001185 016.2 OF 016

127. Brazil Federal Prosecutors Ask State to Suspend Alcoa's Bauxite Mining License

MAY 29, 2007- The federal prosecutor's office in the eastern Amazon state of Para May 21 asked the state governor to suspend Alcoa Aluminum's license to extract bauxite in a planned open-pit mine because of environmental irregularities. The prosecutor's office alleged in an official letter sent to the governor that Alcoa workers doing ground-leveling and other mining site preparations have contaminated streams with untreated human fecal waste. As a result, hepatitis is on the rise in nearby villages that get their drinking water from those streams. The prosecutor's office also contends that the environmental license for the mine should have been issued by IBAMA, the Environment Ministry's licensing agency, and not Sectam, the Para state environmental licensing agency, because the environmental impact of Alcoa's bauxite mining operations will extend beyond Para state and into neighboring state of Maranhao.

Source - BNA

SOBEL